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CHAPTER III.

OF THE PERSONS OF THE ABIPONES, AND THE CONFORMATION OF THEIR BODIES.

142 THE Abipones are well formed, and have handsome faces, much like those of Europeans, except in point of colour, which, though not entirely white, has nothing of the blackness of Negroes and Mulattoes. For that natural whiteness which they have in infancy is somewhat destroyed as they grow up, by the sun, and by the smoke: as nearly the whole of their lives is passed in riding about plains exposed to the beams of the sun, and the short time that they spend in their tents, they keep up a fire on the ground day and night, by the heat and smoke of which they are unavoidably somewhat darkened. Whenever the cold south wind blows, [513] they move the fire to the bed, or place it underneath the hanging net in which they lie, and are thus gradually smoke-dried, like a gammon of bacon in a chimney. The women, when they 142 293 832 ride out into the country, shield their faces from the sun's rays with an umbrella, and are, in consequence, generally fairer than the men, who, more ambitious to be dreaded by their

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enemies than to be loved, to terrify than attract beholders, think the more they are scarred and sun-burnt, the handsomer they are.

I observed that almost all the Abipones had black but rather small eyes; yet they see more acutely with them, than we do with our larger ones; being able clearly to distinguish such minute, or distant objects as would escape the eye of the most quick-sighted European. Frequently, in travelling, when we saw some animal running at a distance, and were unable to distinguish what it was, an Abipon would declare, without hesitation, whether it was a horse or a mule, and whether the colour was black, white, or grey; and on examining the object more closely, we always found him correct.

Moreover, in symmetry of shape, the Abipones yield to no other nation of America. I scarce remember to have seen one of them with a nose like what we see in the generality of Negroes, flat, crooked, turned up towards the forehead, or broader than it should be. The commonest shape is aquiline; as long and sharp as is consistent with beauty. An hundred deformities and blemishes, common among Europeans, are foreign to them. You never see an Abipon with a hump on his back, a wen, a hare lip, a monstrous belly, bandy legs, club feet, or

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words, one of them, applying a forceps to my chin, wanted to give me palpable demonstration of the truth. It was with difficulty that I extricated myself from the hands of the unlucky shaver, choosing rather to believe than groan. 302

The Abipones bear the pain inflicted by the old woman with the forceps, without complaining, that their faces may be smooth and clear; for they cannot endure them to be rough and hairy. For this reason, neither sex will suffer the hairs, with which our eyes are naturally fortified, but have their eye-brows and eye-lashes continually plucked up. This nakedness of the eyes, though it disfigures the handsomest face in a high degree, they deem indispensable to beauty. They ridicule and despise the Europeans for the thick brows which overshadow their eyes, and call them brothers to the ostriches, who have very thick eye-brows. They imagine that the sight of the eye is deadened, and shaded by the adjacent hairs. Whenever they go out to seek honey, and return empty-handed, their constant excuse is, that their eye-brows and eye-lashes have grown, and prevented them from seeing the bees which conduct them to the hives. From the beard, let us proceed to the hair of the head. 302 832 [186] 826

All the Abipones have thick, raven-black 302